

Rawlins 12/4/2014 Public Meeting Comments

Group 1

Thoughts about Mule Deer Working Group and Recommendations

- *Starting to help
- More site specific groups
- *More/right people involved
- Communication/information
 - o Increase
 - o Social media
- Youth Seasons
 - o Likes recommendation
 - Extra season length
 - Same restrictions
 - o Okay with remaining any deer

The Lander/ Green Mountain Mule Deer Working Group remains in favor of Youth hunters being limited to the same restrictions as other license holders in the Lander/Green Mountain deer HAs.

This was discussed on a statewide basis and the decision was made to continue allowing this opportunity. In many/most areas this has no impact at all and is only a very small fraction of the deer harvest.

- o Extra season length for youth hunters

Increased season length for youth hunters in the Green Mountain HAs will be recommended for 2015. It is proposed that youth hunters will have from October 15-October 25 (extra 3 days) to hunt deer in these HAs.
- APRs
 - o *Why not keep it? What's it hurting?
 - o **Antler point restrictions (APRs) are proposed to be removed for Hunt Areas 96, & 97 for the 2015 season. APRs were originally recommended for 2 years, but a 3rd year was added to allow for formation of the Mule Deer Working Group (MDWG). The MDWG is tasked with making long-term recommendations, and is currently in agreement that APRs should be removed.**
 - o **In the Sweetwater Deer Herd, despite APRs being in place, a decrease in yearling buck ratios was observed in 2012/2013. Also with poor fawn survival and yearling recruitment in those years, there was not a great improvement in buck/doe ratios. It is thought that APRs in these areas have run their course.**

- Reduced quality concerns
- *Long term genetic concerns
- **Three (3) point antler restrictions (APRs) were again in place for the 2014 hunting season, thus protecting yearling bucks with this harvest restriction. In 2014, nearly 90% of the mule deer bucks classified in the Sweetwater Herd Unit were either yearlings or have Class 1 antler widths (an adult buck up to 18" wide), indicating the absence of older age class bucks despite reduced harvest levels experienced with APRs. Antler widths have not improved over the last 3 years, and the proportion of Class 1 bucks harvested has increased compared with Class 2 and Class 3 bucks.**
- HA 100 deer Muzzleloader season

ATVs

- *Responsible Advertising
- More restrictions on antler hunting
- Does restricting ATV use cause more issues with trucks/jeeps?
- *Education/communication
- *Ethics/Personal accountability and responsibility
- Older and disabled hunter access concerns

All of these concerns/thoughts and recommendations will be supplied to the BLM, USFS and Trails Program.

2014 Seasons and 2015 Recommendations

- 118 Elk
 - Could raise objective if HA boundary expanded west
 - **We are not looking at changing the HA boundary in 2015. If interest remains in changing the HA boundary it will possibly be reassessed in 2015 for 2016 or 2017 seasons. In 2014, the possibility of a boundary change was assessed but a good western and northern boundary line was not determined. It is likely that even with the expansion of the HA to the west elk will still move further west outside of the HA and be inaccessible to 118 hunters. We also have to consider that a movement of the boundary too far west could be impacting a different Herd Unit.**
 - Cow tag runs earlier and negatively impacts bull hunt
 - **Type 6 licenses have been effective at reducing elk in the Southeastern portion of the HA where private land conflicts may occur, and we do not believe that the limited hunting pressure, before the Type 1 opener, from Type 6 hunters negatively affects elk movement in the HA.**
- 61 Pronghorn
 - Too large to effectively manage. Maybe break into two smaller hunt areas?

- **We believe we can effectively manage this HA, without breaking it into smaller HAs. This was the only Red Desert HA that did not have a license quota reduction in 2014. We are recommending that Type 1 licenses be reduced to 100 for 2015.**

Group 2

Thoughts about Mule Deer Working Group and Recommendations

- In support of working group's structure and especially in support of removal of APR (surprise w/APR charts presented)

ATVs

- *More focus on correct use of ATVs
 - Increased enforcement
 - Maybe something for GF commission to address (statute change)
 - Capture some ATV info on GF website (BLM/Forest Service rules)
 - Add ATV use to ethics/responsibility portion of Hunter Education classes
- All of these concerns/thoughts and recommendations will be supplied to the BLM, USFS and Trails Program.**

2014 Seasons and 2015 Recommendations

- Closing some areas (HA 100)
- *Limited quota for some areas
- Ways to increase access in HA 108
- Senior citizen season
- **We have responded to public interest in an expansion of youth hunting opportunities. We will continue to monitor interest in this season type.**
- Concerns w/youth elk/deer seasons running right up to general openers (push critters out of easily accessed areas)
- Type 7 within 0.5 miles of private land

Other Thoughts

- In favor of this meeting format
- Comments on overall poor representation of hunters at these meetings
- **Locally, we will attempt to advertise meetings more effectively using various media platforms.**
- Some people still don't see that these meetings are working (reason for not attending)

We need your help to get those people here so they can see how the process works for themselves.
- Show how hunters concerns were addressed in our media pieces

Great idea and we will work on implementing that.
- How to increase harvest survey response – make responses a requirement?

- **At this point making harvest survey responses required is not feasible, but we will continue to work on ways to increase harvest survey responses.**

Group 3

Thoughts about Mule Deer Working Group and Recommendations

- Agree with working group process
- Good mix of people/diversity
- Youth Seasons
 - o If want to limit youth, limitations should have to restrict other special interests like archery

This was discussed on a statewide basis and the decision was made to continue allowing this opportunity. In many/most areas this has no impact at all and is only a very small fraction of the deer harvest.

- o Agree with equality across board. They should have to hunt with same restrictions

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- WTD Seasons
 - o Concerned with ability to identify WTD accurately with earlier season recommendation
 - o Concerned with too much harvest on WTD depressing already low population numbers
 - o Two different populations: Riverton vs. Jeffery City
 - o **The Lander/Green Mountain Mule Deer Working Group recommended opening the General License season on October 1, for white-tailed deer only, in both herd units. Hunt Area 97 has more white-tailed deer, but following the EHD outbreak in 2013, we don't believe the population needs additional pressure. Due to potential conflicts with elk seasons, and lower numbers of white-tailed deer in Jeffrey City, we chose not to add to the General License season in Hunt Areas 96 & 97. We feel we should provide the last week of October as a "rest buffer" for hunting. Type 3 and Type 8 White-tailed deer seasons will be open for the entire month in Hunt Area 97 near Jeffrey City. We think this limited opportunity to**

harvest a white-tailed deer will help mule deer but also serve as an additional hunting opportunity for sportsmen.

- APRs
 - o Don't have enough mule deer

ATVs

- Not enough law enforcement presence to enforce regulations (ATV/off-road)
- **We will continue to work on communicating effectively with agencies that regulate ATV travel on public lands.**
- There is an issue with too many people wanting to hunt off ATVs rather than using them as a tool to get somewhere
- Make punishment PAINFUL (i.e. increase fine amounts significantly)
- GF make more areas Walk-Ins similar to BLMs Wilderness Study Areas
- **We will continue to work with landowners to maintain/increase access to hunt.**
- Try to limit numbers of people on Rendle Butte and Sand Hills
- How do you ensure opportunity for handicapped and disabled hunters? Don't forget these folks.

We will continue to work with these hunters to direct them to areas that are more easily accessible.

All of these concerns/thoughts and recommendations will be supplied to the BLM, USFS and Trails Program.

2014 Seasons and 2015 Recommendations

- Would like to see return of APRs in deer area 100
- Leave Red Desert pronghorn like it is while continuing to increase population
- **We are recommending that HA 61 Type 1 licenses be reduced to 100 (50 less licenses) for 2015, while offering a longer season for license holders (17 days more). HA 61 was the only Red Desert hunt area that did not have a Type 1 license reduction in 2014. We are recommending the elimination of the Type 6 season in HA 60 for 2015. We are also recommending a 25 Type 6 license reduction in HA 64, for 2015. We are proposing to extend the season in HA 60 and HA 64 also (9 days more). We are optimistic that these minor changes will increase opportunity for license holders and increase hunter success, at the same time improving doe/fawn ratios.**
- **We are currently reviewing the Red Desert Herd Objective of 15,000 animals. At this point, given the desire from hunters to restore pronghorn densities at that level (15,000), a demonstrated ability to control the herd at that size, and the large amount of publicly accessible land in this herd unit; we are recommending that the objective is retained at a post-hunt objective of 15,000 animals. We are also proposing that management for the Red Desert herd remain in special management.**

- No change – Iron Springs Pronghorn
- No change – Baggs Pronghorn
- Bittercreek Pronghorn – is 25,000 a feasible population to manage towards?
 - Water conditions this year improved conditions, numbers dispersed, and little movement
 - *Decrease mgmt objective to a more reasonable number
 - Would I
 - Would like to see range conditions study and ungulate competition study
- Chain Lakes Mule Deer
 - Change hunting season dates so elk hunters aren't impacted. Move deer season up 1 week and elk season back to allow rest period
 - Could be good candidate area for TRUE choose your weapon
 - Eliminate in-line black powder from muzzleloader area (i.e. make it a true primitive weapon area)
 - **The only change for 2015 for Deer HA 98, is the proposed elimination of APRs. Adjacent HAs are proposing the removal of APRs and we believe it is appropriate to remove the restriction in HA 98.**
 - **There is and will likely continue to be a high demand for limited weapon hunts in this HA; redefining legal equipment is a topic that is being brought up more frequently, but the current structure and legal weapons definition remains popular among residents and nonresidents.**
 - **The opening and closing dates in the HA align with other HAs in Non-resident Region E and simplify season dates for hunters.**
- Shamrock Elk
 - *Make HA bigger (boundary change).
 - Preferably extend west
 - Bitter Creek to what though?
 - No real good North boundary
 - Would require objective increase
 - Liked type 6 area restriction change
 - **We are not looking at changing the HA boundary in 2015. Personnel changes in early 2015 would have made it difficult to adequately assess interest in a boundary change for the 2015 season. If interest remains in changing the HA boundary it will possibly be reassessed in 2015 for 2016 or 2017 seasons. In 2014, the possibility of a boundary change was assessed but a good western and northern boundary line was not determined. It is likely that even with the expansion of the HA to the west elk will still move further west outside of the HA and be inaccessible to 118 hunters. We also have to consider that a movement of the boundary too far west could be impacting a different Herd Unit.**

- Baggs Mule Deer
 - Ungulate competition (horses) in area 100
 - Very few MD around powder mtn
 - Eye test: seemed like more deer and more bucks relative this year
 - What will impacts of wind farm be to overall population?